

## EDITORIAL

One of the privileges of the incoming editor is to provide an editorial in which the goals of the journal are made clear and any changes in policy or emphasis are noted. The editorial provides a public statement as to the direction of the journal, thereby serving at least two, interconnected functions. First, it informs potential contributors as to the appropriateness of the journal as an outlet for their work. Second, it also serves to inform the editorial board as to what the editor envisions, thereby increasing the likelihood that those policies are instantiated within the editorial decision-making process. The editor's view would mean much less if it were not shared by the other members of the board on whom so much of the editorial decision making rests. Therefore, a draft of this editorial was sent to the associate editors for their review and comments. I would not argue that each associate editor endorses fully all the comments that follow; but I would claim that we all are committed to the broad goals enunciated below.

The first editorial of the incoming editor seems an appropriate time to consider the past, present, and future of our journal. Accordingly, I have given much thought to how *JEAB* is perceived, what its mission is, and how we want our journal to progress. To these ends, I also solicited comments from a large number of those who have published in the journal or served on its editorial board. The responses from reviewers and authors about editorial practices, and their perceptions of *JEAB*, were remarkably consistent. Curiously, the editorial process that was so well regarded by many for its comprehensiveness was also singled out as a problem by others.

To the credit of the editorial board and guest reviewers, the majority of contributors noted that the reviews of their manuscripts were "careful," "helpful," "thoughtful," and that they "often educated the authors." In addition, it was mentioned that the feedback provided authors was "usually constructive" and "sympathetic," and that the review process was "speedy" and "timely." It was gratifying to hear that the reviews were considered to be of "high quality." Probably the best way

to consider our journal is in light of the comment made by one researcher who stated: "The culture of *JEAB* is that it exists to publish papers, not to reject them."

But detailed, thorough reviews also can lead to a different evaluation of the editorial decision-making process. Some contributors commented that reviews sometimes "addressed itty-bitty technical issues, rather than broad problems," that such detailed reviews were "too obtrusive," "overbearing," and "picky." Several felt there was an "ideological bias that interfered with objective evaluation," or that there was too much "quibbling over language."

In addition, some felt that *JEAB* was getting too mathematical and formal, whereas others saw the quantitative work as a strength to be pursued. Some felt the journal must remain steadfast in its commitment to behavior analytic and Skinnerian interpretations, whereas others felt it was essential to loosen the grip of what one person referred to, sardonically and with his tongue firmly entrenched in his cheek, as the "thought police."

I believe these comments do represent the journal rather well. We strive, and will continue to strive, for high quality, detailed reviews that are positive in tone, helpful, even if critical. I want authors to know that their work is taken seriously. Reviewers have been generous with their time and ensured that manuscripts receive a careful, fair, and detailed evaluation. It is the editor and associate editors who, of course, take final responsibility for editorial decisions. They act as the final arbiter and, as action editors on individual manuscripts, provide their own evaluation of the work. I would hope that what is seen as picky and overbearing at times also may be interpreted as our concern for completeness, consistency, and quality. Of course, a balance must be reached between maintaining editorial standards and ensuring that the author's "voice" comes through.

Where would I like the journal to be headed? Some of what I shall propose may reveal a susceptibility to source amnesia—I am not always certain if what I am suggesting is something I thought of or if it was a comment

made by another. So let me append the following caveat: Anything that sounds good, valuable, and with which you agree is clearly my idea; anything that seems questionable, thoughtless, crazy, or troublesome, is clearly someone else's idea.

In discussing the future, I shall stay away from predictions. I have long been impressed by the inability of prognosticators to predict accurately. Consider the track record of many of our social, political, and sports commentators. Although I make no predictions, I do want to offer comments on what I would like to see published in *JEAB* over the next 4 years as the journal ends its first half-century of publication. It is likely that some will be annoyed by my not demanding that *JEAB* remain strictly Skinnerian, that it eschew statistics, and that it minimize quantitative modeling; then, too, others may be annoyed because they do not perceive the journal as being loosened enough from the grips of behaviorists. Maybe we should bear in mind the comment by Willard Quine, one of the 20th century's most influential analytic philosophers, who stated: "I do consider myself as behavioristic as anyone in his right mind could be."

Importantly, I do not want to limit the scope of the journal. Unfortunately, we are seen by some as narrow and limited, and we need to move proactively to change that view. Behavior is important; behavior is of interest. But we need not limit what aspects of behavior are open for scientific investigation. Nor do I want to restrict theoretical speculation. I do not mean to suggest that we will tolerate looseness in language or sloppy thinking. What matters is our science. Of course, the journal has a mission that must be fulfilled. The masthead states: "The *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior* is primarily for the original publication of experiments relevant to the behavior of individual organisms." Michael Zeiler noted in his editorial (1977) when he assumed the editorship of *JEAB*, however, that the journal's policy makes clear its commitment to the experimental analysis of individual behavior, "but not with a particular type of experimentation or subject matter." There is much research out there, I believe, that would be of interest and of scientific value to those in our area and related areas but which is not usually published

or even discussed in *JEAB*. I do not want us to be perceived as the "thought police." This is not to suggest that we merely keep experimental rigor while we allow conceptual confusion, but rather that we need to let the author's view and voice come through.

Regarding the charge that *JEAB* is narrow, I would note that the journal has published experiments with hypothetical reinforcers (e.g., Howard Rachlin's research on discounting delayed rewards). Certainly that qualifies as nontraditional for this journal. So, too, the journal has been a leader in quantitative analyses of behavior and in behavioral economics. We have a special issue planned on the relation of behavior and neuroscience. I see no inherent conflict between the traditional and the new. The criteria for publication include rigor and quality—and interest. I prefer to embrace alternatives rather than exclude them. Science follows a selectionistic approach. That which is valuable remains; that which is detrimental gets selected out. Let us increase variability so as to ensure evolutionary change that advances our discipline.

I encourage authors to consider *JEAB* as an exciting place to have their work fairly and carefully evaluated. As long as it is consistent with the mission of the journal, no work will be dismissed arbitrarily. I also strongly encourage the submission of review papers. I believe they are of critical value in summarizing where we are at the moment so that we can see where we need to progress and what questions remain to be answered. In addition to soliciting review papers, I would ask that contributors consider submitting brief conceptual papers that highlight research questions that remain to be examined. It may well be that there are some key questions for which satisfactory answers have yet to be provided. What remains to be done? What questions have not been answered, or, perhaps, not even asked? Brief contributions along this line might well benefit the discipline. Finally, I invite articles from those who may not otherwise publish in *JEAB* and who may want to make their work known to our broad readership.

The Greek philosopher Parmenides held that all change was illusion. It may well be that all incoming editors have the illusion that they can effect meaningful change. What may be closer to the truth is that the editor

of an established journal usually will have little impact beyond a tweaking here and there; but can (or should) he or she try to effect a major shift in editorial practice? After all, it is the scientist and the scientific community who determine what is exciting and what may be of value. The editors are there to try to ensure that quality comes through, but in the final analysis, it is the authors who determine the nature of a scientific journal. We need to make our journal inviting and supportive to ensure that good work continues to come our way. We will strive to distinguish our journal by maintaining its rigor and to ensure its respect as a place where good behavioral science is published. We hope to make clear that the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior* is the place to read quality work on the behavior of individual organisms approached from various perspectives.

In reviewing a manuscript for publication, one is engaged in a signal-detection task.<sup>1</sup> When a manuscript is evaluated, we are, in effect, calculating the probability of selecting a quality scientific paper that should be published in *JEAB* given that there not only are

acceptable and unacceptable papers but also some degree of "perceptual noise." There are hits (correct acceptances) and correct rejections, but so, too, there are false alarms (accepting a paper that should be rejected) and false rejections (rejecting a paper that should be accepted). If one shifts the criteria in order to increase the likelihood of hits, then one also necessarily increases the likelihood of false alarms. But if one makes the criteria very strict in order to reduce the likelihood of false alarms to extremely low levels, then one also necessarily decreases the hit rate. Yet we don't want to lose that special paper, even if it might mean we sometimes make an error. Let's not just play safe—let's encourage new approaches, ideas, issues, as long as we remain rigorous and clear headed. If we only choose that which is safe, or that which is consistent with past behavior, then we will be publishing a lot of papers that deal with "itty-bitty technical issues"; papers that are "narrow," boring, and deal only with timeworn ideas. If what we publish ignites scientific response, then all the better—for the journal, its readers, and our discipline.

Leonard Green  
Editor

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<sup>1</sup>It was A. C. Catania, I believe, who suggested the analogy between editorial decision making and a signal-detection task. Bearing in mind the false memory phenomenon, however, I leave it to him and others to correct the attribution.

## REFERENCES

- Zeiler, M. D. (1977). Editorial. *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, 25, 1-2.